THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATORY COMMISSION

ICT NEWSLETTER

Students rewarded for their Ideas and Innovations at NTRC's i^2 Competition Finals

Several groups from secondary and tertiary educational institutions across St. Vincent and the Grenadines were rewarded with cash prizes up to $3,500.00, smart phones, tablets and one year of broadband services after having participated in the third annual ideas and innovation competition (i^2 competition) organized by the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC). This event took place at the NIS' Main Conference room on January 14, 2016. The competition provided a forum for the Secondary and Tertiary students to display their innovations in producing mobile applications or ideas that would essentially aid the operations of the public service resulting in saving financial resources.

Some of the innovative ideas put forward via the competition included a zip line to the La Soufreire Volcano, A recycling plant for solid waste, electronic tourism licensing system amongst others. Mobile applications included an app that allows tourists to find authorized taxis; a fire alert system to alert the fire department of a fire; an app to track minibuses amongst many others.

Partners of this year's competition included Ministry of Education, National Insurance Services (NIS), the Centre for Enterprise Development (CED), the Searchlight Newspaper, Toastmasters Organization, Hot 97.1, St Vincent and the Grenadines Broadcasting Corporation (SVGBC), IK TV, Fanfare events, King Computer Corporation, National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and ITFX Solutions.

Results of the competition can be viewed on our website http://www.ntrc.vc/general/ntrcs-i-squared-competition/.

What is an Internet Exchange Point?

An internet exchange point (IXP) is a physical network access point through which major network providers connect their networks and exchange traffic. The primary focus of an exchange point is to facilitate network interconnection through an exchange access point instead of expensive international third-party networks.

Internet exchange points were created to minimize the part of an Internet service provider's (ISP) local network traffic that had to go through an international upstream provider.

Some advantages of an IXP include:

- Allowing high speed data transfer
- Reducing latency
- Providing fault tolerance
- Improving routing efficiency
- Improving bandwidth

The physical infrastructure includes one or more high-speed network Ethernet switches. The traffic exchange is managed through a mutual peering agreement conformed to by all ISPs. The ISPs normally specify the routes through the peering relationship. The operational costs of an IXP are often shared among all the participating ISPs.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines launched its IXP on January 25, 2016.

Internet eXchange Point (IXP) launched in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

IXP Equipment installed in racks at cable landing station, Arnos Vale
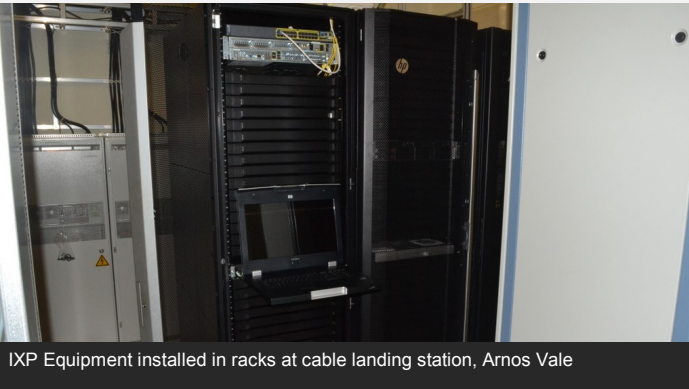
The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Internet Exchange Point was officially launched on January 25, 2016 at the NIS Training Room, Upper Bay Street, Kingstown.

An Internet Exchange Point (IXP), allows for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to route data traffic between ISPs locally rather than transmitting the data outside the country.

The launch ceremony was held at the beginning of a two day workshop hosted by the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) in conjunction with the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) and the Caribbean Regional Communications Infrastructure Program (CARCIP). The objectives of the workshop were to identify the role of the IXP in building the local and regional Internet ecosystem in the country; determine how to ensure sustainable operations of the IXP; outline the measures that need to be taken to maximize IXP impact and discuss the technical considerations to support the next phase of implementation of the IXP.

It is envisioned that the IXP will serve as a catalyst for innovation and development of internet services and applications in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The presence of the IXP can improve local Internet resilience by eliminating the dependence on international connectivity for local Internet services and Internet-based communications.

The internet exchange point was established from a World Bank funded CARCIP project which provided equipment such as servers and racks. Packet Clearing House (PCH), an international organization responsible for providing operational support and security to critical Internet infrastructure such as Internet exchange points , donated a switch and router to the IXP.

The physical interconnection point is at the cable landing station in Arnos Vale where the three internet services providers (LIME, Digicel and Flow), interconnect.

Beacon Technology launched in St. Kitts
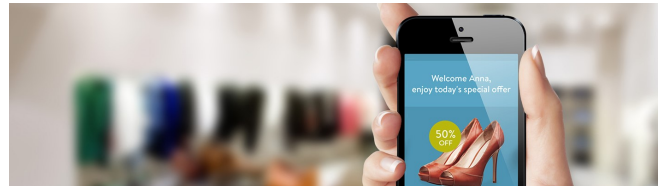
Some members of the business community in St. Kitts were introduced to a cutting edge technology that is expected to change the way the corporate community do marketing. Nijoe Farrell of Carib Beacon Marketing Solutions unveiled the Beacon—A small USB device that uses Bluetooth technology to attract customers via their smartphones to shop inside their business establishments. This USB device will communicate with an icon on the customers' smartphone called the Physical Web. Mr. Farrell explained that once customers tap on the business that are listed on the Physical Web icon, customers can access a promotional page and interact with the business via browsers.

They can access digital coupons and discounts and use their phone inside the stores to access those specials. The person can also share the promotional page via Whatsapp, Facebook or Twitter so that others can also benefit from the promotion. The physical web icon can be downloaded not only to a smartphone but any other mobile device.

Mr. Farrell said this concept was first developed by the tech company Apple Computers a few years ago. "Apple came up with the idea that if a beacon can be used as a lighthouse to guide a ship into port, why can't we use the same type of concept to guide customers or direct them to where a promotion is, or a sale is or where information can be found," Mr. Farrell said.

Mr. Farrell and his team launched the product at Chamber of Commerce Conference room to a group of business representatives and plans are in the works to roll it out to the wider St. Kitts and Nevis community. He believes the Beacon will change the way companies in St. Kitts and the wider Caribbean market their businesses and how they interact with their customers. "The idea is to create not only a sense of urgency, but that level of engagement (with the customer)," Mr. Farrell said.

Source: SKN Vibes

FLOW set to launch 'LTE' in Jamaica

FLOW has announced another first – the telecommunications firm is now carrying out work on a Long Term Evolution (LTE) upgrade to sections of its network that will introduce advanced next-generation mobile internet speeds to Jamaica. This ground-breaking move will facilitate mobile internet connectivity of up to 10 times faster than the 4G mobile speeds which FLOW subscribers all across Jamaica now enjoy.

"These are indeed exciting times for the FLOW brand as we are constantly pushing the boundaries in our bid to meet and exceed the expectations of our customers," said Garfield Sinclair, Managing Director of FLOW Jamaica. The MD also added, "This first world technology is sure to delight our customers as it places Jamaica on par with, if not ahead of many developed countries around the globe."

"Initially we will be rolling out LTE in major high traffic sections of the Kingston metropolitan area and of the North Coast," he further explained. With the use of handheld devices including smartphones, tablets and Wi-Fi devices, customers will be able to access super-fast Mobile Internet network with connectivity that is expected to be up to 50 megabits per second (Mbps) on the downlink and 5 Mbps on the uplink in areas where the service is introduced.

We are putting the customer at the heart of what we do and this is borne out by our continued investment in our people, technology, products and service delivery. In our bid to be number one with customers we have: Increased Fixed Internet speeds of more than 20 Mbps on our HFC network; Delivered widespread 4G mobile coverage across Jamaica; Invested in interactive, state of the art Retail experience centres; announced plans to repatriate our Customer Call Centres of Excellence to Jamaica

Currently, the company offers a variety of attractive package deals and rates on its 4G HSPA+ service which include access for as low as $50 with some plans offering a customer -friendly data roll-over option.

FLOW's Managing Director further noted that its combined 4G/ LTE Mobile Internet network will improve productivity for business and government customers while providing residential customers with a premium experience.

Source: Go Jamaica via ICT Pulse

CTO to celebrate 115 years of existence

LONDON, 22 JANUARY 2016 – Activities to mark the 115th anniversary of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) were announced last week at a special anniversary launch ceremony attended by over 120 member country representatives, diplomats, industry executives and journalists.

The CTO's origins go back to 1901 with the creation of the Pacific Cable Board (PCB) established to operate the first trans-Pacific sub-marine telegraphic cable linking Canada to Australia. With the advent of radio communications and the expansion of the cable system to other regions forming a global submarine cable network, PCB would undergo several changes, including the creation of Cable & Wireless and, shortly after, the Commonwealth Communications Council, one of the bodies created to oversee access to the cable system and which will be later merged to form the CTO in its present form.

After giving a brief historical account of the history of the CTO to delegates guests at the anniversary launch ceremony held in London on Wednesday, Secretary-General Shola Taylor remarked: "The ICT landscape is changing fast and the theme of our celebrations aptly captures the developments that are taking place. The challenges of building infrastructure to provide for the four billion people currently not connected in the world stares us in the face.

"Governments have to adopt the right policies. Regulators have to ensure that they provide an enabling regulatory environment to attract the high capital investments required for infrastructure expansion. Operators and service providers must also deliver the much needed infrastructure to spur economic growth." Mr Taylor said.

Celebrated under the theme "From Subsea to Cyberspace", the anniversary year will include the holding of the Commonwealth ICT Awards for achievements by members in a range of areas including universal access, capacity building, policy and regulatory environments, cybersecurity, and youth empowerment, as well as the Commonwealth Youth ICT Applications Competition aimed at youths in Commonwealth countries, with entry categories for 2016 to include e-commerce, e-education, e-agriculture, and e-health.

Source: CTO

Ofcom will let businesses ditch broadband contracts if suffering slow speeds

Ofcom (the telecommunications regulator in the UK) has laid down the law on internet service providers (ISPs) and announced that businesses will be able to leave their contract without a fee if speeds fall below guaranteed levels.

As part of a new Ofcom code, UK ISPs will have to offer all business customers the right to exit their contract without penalty from 30 September 2016 if speeds fall below a minimum guaranteed level, giving companies the same level of protection recently bestowed on residential broadband users.

The code, to which seven ISPs - BT Business, Virgin Media, TalkTalk Business, KCOM, Daisy Communications, XLN and Ze - have given the nod, also requires them to give businesses clearer, more accurate information and broadband speeds before they sign up to a contract, and to manage customers' speed-related problems quickly and effectively.

It applies to all businesses regardless of size, Ofcom said, and to all standard business broadband services across all technologies including ADSL, cable, fibre-to-the-cabinet, fibre-to-the-premises, wireless and satellite.

Sharon White, Ofcom chief executive, said: "Ensuring consumers get the best possible communications services is Ofcom's top priority. And that includes businesses getting the broadband speeds they need."

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), which has long called out the UK's broadband offerings as "not fit for purpose" as many firms still struggle with speeds under 2Mbps, has welcomed Ofcom's move.

Mike Cherry, policy director at the FSB, said: "A dependable broadband connection is now essential for almost every aspect of modern business life. Everything from driving online sales, customer relations and accessing data held in the cloud relies on a stable broadband connection. Yet small businesses' dissatisfaction with broadband providers appears to be widespread and deeply felt.

Source: The Inquirer

TIA Proposes Path Forward for Commercial Use of Higher Frequency Spectrum Important to the Internet of Things, 5G

The Telecommunications Industry Association (TIA), the leading association representing the manufacturers and suppliers of high-tech communications networks, filed comments with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) on January 27, 2016 in support of the Commission's efforts to make higher frequency spectrum available for commercial wireless broadband use in bands above 24 GHz.

"The FCC's Spectrum Frontiers proceeding is an important step towards enabling the technologies of the future, including 5G and the Internet of Things," said TIA CEO Scott Belcher. "Other countries have been taking steps and it is critical that the United States act now to maintain our technological leadership in the next generation of wireless technology."

"TIA has proposed a path forward for the FCC to open higher frequency spectrum for multiple platforms and uses, including mobile, unlicensed and satellite," Belcher continued. "We believe co-existence of both existing and new services is possible with our plan. We applaud the FCC for its actions and look forward to working with the Commission in the coming months as these rules are finalized."

In its filing, TIA urged the FCC to provide for flexible use in the 28, 37, and 39 GHz bands by adopting rules that enable operation of both existing and new services, and to license these bands on an exclusive basis. TIA proposed that fixed-satellite service (FSS) be permitted to continue operating under existing rules, and that private arrangements or the acquisition of terrestrial spectrum rights through auctions or secondary market transactions would facilitate spectrum sharing without imposing one-size-fits-all requirements that could deter investment.

Source: Telecom Reseller